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SPECIAL REPORT

on Communist Propaganda

*THE I. ALEKSANDROV ARTICLE IN PRAVDA:
INCEPTION OF A NEW STAGE IN PRESSURE ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA*

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FOREWORD

This report examines the new stage in Soviet propaganda pressure on Czechoslovakia launched on 11 July with the publication of the authoritative PRAVDA article under the signature of I. Aleksandrov and escalated on 17 July with the release of the letter sent to the Prague leadership by the Soviet, Polish, East German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian parties.

The new stage is marked by both explicit and implied analogy with the Hungarian events of November 1956. Part I of this report recapitulates, as background, the record of Soviet propaganda behavior in the days preceding the intervention in Hungary. Part II summarizes the background and content of the Soviet propaganda appraisal of the present situation in Czechoslovakia, as set forth in the Aleksandrov article on the 11th and spelled out bluntly and ominously in the letter released on the 17th.

A final section examines the status of the Soviet propaganda pressure on Czechoslovakia at this juncture as groundwork and justification for Soviet action. Moscow's appraisal of the situation keeps all options open, up to and including the most drastic, and provides the Soviets with a propaganda setting for movement in any direction. An emergent "counterrevolutionary" situation is described, said to be opposed by "healthy" forces among the "workers" and in the party. So far the "healthy" forces--and the "counterrevolutionaries"--in the leadership are unnamed, and Dubcek is aligned with neither category. Moscow has thus established a propaganda base from which it can back off should the Dubcek regime succumb to the pressure and succeed in controlling the situation. And it has established a propaganda base for action by portraying the "socialist system" and the Warsaw Pact alliance as threatened.

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THE I. ALEKSANDROV ARTICLE IN PRAVDA:
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I. BACKGROUND: MOSCOW'S PROPAGANDA RESPONSE TO THE HUNGARIAN EVENTS

Since the Hungarian Revolution was a spontaneous uprising for which Moscow propagandists were of necessity unprepared, their initial reaction was silence. Radio Moscow's first account of the 23 October 1956 antigovernment demonstration in Budapest, broadcast two days after the event, merely informed the Soviet domestic audience that attempts of "underground reactionary organizations" to start a counterrevolutionary revolt against the people's regime had been frustrated and that calm had been restored. Subsequent selective reportage in Soviet media sought to convey the impression that the Hungarian people were opposed to the uprising from the start. The first authoritative interpretation of the rebellion appeared in a 28 October PRAVDA article, which set a basic pattern that was preserved throughout and following the revolution.

According to the article, the 23 October demonstration by "loyal" Hungarian youth was seized upon by "counterrevolutionary gangs" led by "Horthyite officers," financed by the West, to provoke "counterrevolution" and restore capitalism. The majority in the party and populace, pictured as opposed to the counterrevolutionary trend, were described as both "loyal" and "honest"--language echoed in subsequent comment, which also called them "healthy." Explaining the Soviet role, the article declared:

In defending the popular democratic regime..., the Hungarian Government was obliged to make use of the armed forces. Units of the Hungarian army began the liquidation of the counterrevolutionary rebellion. The Hungarian Government asked the USSR Government for assistance. In response to this request, Soviet military units stationed in Hungary under the Warsaw Treaty came to the aid of the Hungarian troops and Hungarian workers who were defending their people's state. The use of Soviet troops in the struggle against the counterrevolution, as pointed out in the speech of Comrade Imre Nagy broadcast on 25 October,

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became "necessary" for the vital interests of our socialist regime.

The PRAVDA article went on to point out that as a result of the measures adopted by the "leaders" of the party and government, "the adventure was crushed" and a new government was established on a broad democratic basis led by "Comrade Imre Nagy."

On 29 October the Soviet domestic audience was told that the situation in the Hungarian capital was returning to normal. The following day the Soviet Government issued a conciliatory statement pledging "equality" in relations among socialist states, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest, and "negotiations" on the presence of Soviet forces in Hungary.

On 1 November Radio Moscow, in its first broadcast to the Hungarians on the rebellion, responded to Western "bourgeois propaganda lies":

How many dirty charges have been leveled against the Soviet Union in connection with events in Hungary! The Soviet Government has faithfully followed Lenin's principle concerning respect for other nations' sovereignty, and it is far from the thought of forcing its will on Hungary, of interfering in its internal affairs.

Following Nagy's 31 October Kossuth Square speech which broached the subject of Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, his 1 November demand presented to the Soviet Ambassador that Soviet troops leave the country, and his statement giving "immediate notice" that Hungary was terminating its participation in the Warsaw Pact, Moscow's propaganda assumed an ominous tone, building up the specific justification for the Soviet military intervention on 4 November.

Where Moscow's earlier propaganda professed confidence that the Hungarian Government was capable of overcoming all "difficulties" and talked about the quelling of an abortive coup, Radio Moscow on 2 November informed its domestic listeners that the foundations of people's rule in Hungary were being threatened:

...it is quite clear that the enemies of Hungary are now trying to assume a disguise and to push the Hungarian People's Republic away from the path of building communism into the camp of imperialism and reaction....

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Various dark forces, which do not represent the interests of the Hungarian people at all, have hastened to associate themselves with the just discontent expressed by healthy elements of the Hungarian people, in connection with certain shortcomings in the work of the state apparatus of Hungary. The disorders in Budapest and in other parts of the country have been used by enemies of the Hungarian working people and by their foreign sponsors... and a situation is now arising which threatens the achievements attained by the Hungarian working people during the years of people's rule.

...The Soviet people have sincere sympathy for the fraternal Hungarian people and trust that they will be able to emerge with honor from all the difficulties artificially created by their enemies.

In attempting to convey the impression that Hungary's socialist "friends" were unanimous in this appraisal, the broadcast quoted the Czechoslovak RUDE PRAVO: "The fate of an allied country is not and cannot be of no concern to our people... the recent events clearly testify that the road leading to the construction of socialism in Hungary is seriously threatened." The radio then quoted a PZPR Central Committee statement similarly charging that "the foundations of the socialist regime are threatened," warning that Hungary is moving to "catastrophe," and expressing confidence that "the working class" will be able to "rebuff" the attempts of reaction.

On 3 November, the Hungarian audience was put on notice regarding the shift in Moscow's line. Where earlier Radio Moscow had assured Hungarians that the government had the insurrection under control and that the Soviet Union had no intention of trying to impose its will on Hungary, a broadcast to Hungary on 3 November warned:

Reactionary elements are getting the upper hand more and more obviously in Hungary. The foundations of the socialist order are in danger. Chaos and turmoil prevails throughout the country. Reactionary gangs are murdering communists with bestial cruelty.

Other Moscow radio comment for listeners in Hungary began to focus on the threat Hungarian developments posed for socialism, quoting comment from East European communist papers which echoed Moscow's warnings of the danger of reaction getting the upper

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hand in the country. On 3 November Soviet domestic comment continued to stress the "counterrevolution" theme.

On 4 November, the day Moscow intervened to crush the rebellion and depose the Nagy regime, PRAVDA rationalized the intervention in a widely broadcast editorial which repeated virtually all the charges leveled against the "counterrevolutionaries" in the PRAVDA article of 28 October. Nagy, however, pictured on 28 October as a loyal member of the Communist Party, was now labeled an "accomplice" of the rebels and his government was said to have collapsed: "The government of Imre Nagy, which cleared the way for reaction and counterrevolution, has disintegrated and ceased to exist." Faced with "mortal danger" threatening People's Hungary, PRAVDA declared, the "true Hungarian patriots," under Janos Kadar, "serried their ranks," formed a new government, asked for Soviet assistance, and smashed the counterrevolution.

In its broadcasts to Hungary Moscow offered a rationale for the Soviet intervention in the same terms but made a more elaborate defense of the Warsaw Pact than Moscow broadcast to other audiences. A typical commentary was devoted to explaining the necessity for the Pact's existence so long as NATO remained extant. It was under the Warsaw Pact, the commentator pointed out, that the Hungarian Government was able to call upon Soviet troops for help. Other broadcasts tailored for Hungary, including "friendly" messages to Hungarian workers from their Soviet counterparts, played up Soviet-Hungarian affinity stemming from a common cause.

II. THE ALEKSANDROV ARTICLE: DIRECT AND IMPLICIT REMINDERS OF HUNGARY

The appearance of the I. Aleksandrov article in the 11 July 1968 PRAVDA followed a steady increase in Soviet expressions of concern over the situation in Czechoslovakia. There was a hiatus in the last two weeks of May, from Kosygin's Czechoslovak visit until the end of the month when the Czechoslovak Central Committee plenum suspended Novotny's party membership. After that the pressure mounted. On 14 June Konstantinov's PRAVDA article leveled Moscow's first direct attack at a ranking member of the Czechoslovak regime, denouncing party Secretary Cisar for "revisionist" views expressed in a speech more than a month earlier. During the period surrounding the start of the Warsaw Pact maneuvers on 20 June, Moscow propaganda media waged an active campaign against tendencies in Czechoslovakia allegedly running counter to socialism and Czechoslovak-Soviet solidarity.

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The Aleksandrov article was preceded by wide, prolonged Soviet radio and press publicity for letters from Soviet citizens responding sympathetically to a letter from the conservative Czechoslovak People's Militia, published in PRAVDA on 21 June, expressing concern over "antisocialist" phenomena in Czechoslovakia and efforts to undermine Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship. On 7 July PRAVDA editorially assured the "communists" of Czechoslovakia that they could rely on the Soviet "people's" support.

Until 10 July Moscow media ignored the ultraliberal "2,000 Words" document published in Prague on 27 June calling for a radical speedup of liberalization through grassroots action--a document decried by the Czechoslovak party Presidium and by Dubcek as conducive to anarchy. On the 10th, an article by "Journalist" in LITERARY GAZETTE mounted the first Soviet attack on the document, depicting it as "counterrevolutionary," and Radio Moscow broadcast the article in Czech and Slovak.

The Aleksandrov article appeared the next day, against this background and against the backdrop of Prague's refusal to attend a bloc summit meeting on the Czechoslovak situation, its calls for the departure of Soviet troops following the Pact exercises, and the continuing pressure in Czechoslovakia for the ouster of party diehards prior to the crucial September party congress. The article's authoritativeness was confirmed by Kosygin on 13 July, at his press conference in Stockholm at the windup of a state visit, when he declared that it "reflects our assessment" of the Czechoslovak events.

Entitled "The Attack Against the Socialist Foundations of Czechoslovakia," the article used the "2,000 Words" statement as the peg for a major escalation of the Soviet attack on developments in Czechoslovakia. Where the preceding day's LITERARY GAZETTE attack foreshadowed, the Aleksandrov article was confined largely to the "2,000 Words" itself, Aleksandrov treated the document as "by no means an isolated phenomenon"--as evidence, rather, of "the activation of rightwing and actually counterrevolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia which are evidently associated with imperialist reaction." The forces "hostile" to the Czechoslovak people, the article said, seem to be in a hurry to exploit the "unstable situation" which has arisen in order to "reach their counter-revolutionary objectives."

The article pointed explicitly to a parallel with the 1956 Hungarian events in stating that tactics used by elements like the authors of the "2,000 Words"--paying lip service to the building

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of socialism while plotting to overthrow the socialist system--"are not new" but "were used at one time by counterrevolutionary elements in Hungary who attempted to undermine the Hungarian people's socialist achievements in 1956."

Aleksandrov described the "healthy forces in the party and the country" as fully aware of the dangers in the "2,000 Words" statement, and he took due note of the fact that the "anticommunist" nature of the document had been denounced by the Czechoslovak Communist Party Presidium. Elsewhere the article observed, however, that "certain leading figures in Czechoslovakia"--unnamed--had made "ambiguous statements in which they try to minimize the danger in the counterrevolutionary '2,000 Words.'" While also acknowledging the party Central Committee's warning about "anticommunist" elements at its May plenum, the article suggested that the leadership's control over the situation was slipping by pointing to "increased malicious, intensive attacks against the Communist Party and the socialist system" since that plenum.

Aleksandrov cited other bloc papers--Sofia's RABOTNICHESKO DELO and Budapest's NEPSZARADSAG--backing the Soviet position in the current crisis. He stressed the "awareness" of the Soviet people and those of other socialist countries that antisocialist forces "can seriously upset the further development of fraternal Czechoslovakia," and he asserted their "confidence that Czechoslovak communists and all workers of Czechoslovakia... will know how to give a decisive rebuff" to reactionary antisocialist forces there.

III. THE BLOC LETTER: COLLECTIVE ESCALATION OF THE PRESSURE

Followed up in the Soviet central press on 12 July, in Kalitin's SOVIET RUSSIA article entitled "The Diversionists Are Looking for a Crack" and in an article in IZVESTIYA, the Aleksandrov article was reprinted in full in the Polish, East German, and Bulgarian party dailies and in abridged form in

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the Hungarian party organ.* The Warsaw TRYBUNA LUDU stated editorially on 14 July that "the barrier created" by Poland, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia in alliance with the Soviet Union against the West German threat "cannot be weakened in any sector" and asserted each party's "responsibility" to defend socialism in the other socialist countries. East Berlin's NEUES DEUTSCHLAND published an editorial article on 13 July picturing the GDR as threatened by "imperialism's" offensive against Czechoslovakia.

NEUES DEUTSCHLAND invoked the GDR's bilateral mutual assistance treaty with Czechoslovakia in declaring: "We will at all times to the best of our ability and power aid the just and great cause of socialism in Czechoslovakia." TRYBUNA LUDU declared that the strength of bilateral alliances and the Warsaw Pact depend "on the internal strength of the socialist system" in each country and declared that the Polish people had suffered too much to be "indifferent to what is happening beyond our southern frontier."

Moscow set out to document its portrayal of concerted bloc concern, with broadcasts on 15 July reporting a PRAVDA survey of bloc editorial comment and noting that TRYBUNA LUDU and NEUES DEUTSCHLAND had both expressed "alarm over the spread of antisocialist statements in Czechoslovakia."

The collective pressure culminated in the release on 17 July--first by the Budapest MTI and shortly thereafter by the Soviet domestic radio--of the 15 July letter sent to the Czechoslovak leadership by the Soviet Union and its hardlining allies following the summit conference in Warsaw. The text appeared in the Soviet press on the 18th.

* While the Aleksandrov article cited NEPSZABADSAG in seeking to document a picture of collective bloc concern over the Czechoslovak events, Hungarian propaganda has retained elements of moderation and restraint. On 13 July, two days after the appearance of the Aleksandrov article, the Budapest MTI publicized a speech by NEPSZABADSAG chief editor Gonstonyi denying that developments in Czechoslovakia had reached the stage of "counterrevolution." In Moscow on 3 July--transparently reacting to a 15 June article in the Prague LITERARNI LISTI which had sought to rehabilitate the image of Imre Nagy--Kadar had asserted "our right and duty" to resort "even to instruments of power" in defending socialism, but had stipulated that such action would be warranted only when class enemies started to attack the foundations of socialism "in an organized fashion and with acts of force."

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The Aleksandrov article's authoritative interpretation of the dangers inherent in the Czechoslovak situation is spelled out bluntly and specifically in the letter. The basic rationale for Moscow's right to interfere in the internal affairs of another communist state is reasserted: "Counterrevolutionary forces supported by imperialism" are attempting to "undermine the socialist foundations" of Czechoslovakia. But where the Aleksandrov article merely implied that the Czech situation was a concern of the whole socialist community, the letter declares: "This is no longer your affair alone. This is the affair of all communist and workers parties and all countries which are linked by alliance, cooperation, and friendship." The threat to the leading role of the Communist Party, the letter adds, "leads to the liquidation of the socialist system in Czechoslovakia," and "through this the foundations of our alliance and the security of our countries are threatened."

Picturing a situation in Czechoslovakia that is "completely unacceptable for a socialist country," the letter states that "reactionary" and "counterrevolutionary" forces are intensifying their activities and have launched a campaign against "the Czechoslovak Communist Party and all its honest, devoted cadres." "Revisionists," moreover, are said to have seized Czechoslovak media and to be using them to attack the Communist Party and "deceive" the workers. The media are also accused of launching a campaign on the recent Warsaw Pact exercises to create "mistrust" of the Soviet Union.

Where the Aleksandrov article implied that the leadership was lax in meeting these attacks and hinted it was losing control, the letter declares openly that "despite the resolution of the May plenum by the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee..., it has not repelled the attacks of reaction." Elsewhere the letter asks the Czechoslovak leaders: "Do you not see that the party is losing control over the events and is tending more and more to withdraw under pressure from anticommunist forces?"

The letter then sets forth its demands: the party must take over the mass media, the "antisocialist forces" and all political organizations opposed to socialism must be suppressed, and the party must observe the principles of "Marxism-Leninism" and "democratic centralism." Neither Dubcek nor any other top leader is named. After stipulating its demands, the letter invokes the "healthy" forces discerned in the Aleksandrov article and appeals to them directly:

We know that forces exist in Czechoslovakia capable of defending the socialist regime and defeating antisocialist

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elements. The working class, working peasantry, progressive intelligentsia--the overwhelming majority of the workers... are ready to do everything for the further development of the socialist society. The task is today to provide these healthy forces with clear perspectives. Let us mobilize and lead them into battle against the counterrevolutionary forces so that they should preserve and consolidate socialism in Czechoslovakia.

The letter pledges that in this "struggle" the "working class" "can count on the solidarity and complete assistance of the fraternal socialist countries." Where the Aleksandrov article asserted the concern and avowed the support of Czechoslovakia's socialist friends in general terms, the letter specifically stresses the bond of the Warsaw Pact, calling the crisis in Czechoslovakia "a common cause of our countries, united in the Warsaw Pact, to safeguard our alliance, European peace, and security." This brandishing of the Pact prefaces the declaration: "We shall never be resigned to imperialism making a breach in the socialist system, by peaceful or unpeaceful means, from inside or outside, and transforming power relations in Europe to its own advantage."

IV. THE STATUS OF MOSCOW'S PROPAGANDA GROUNDWORK: FREEDOM FOR MANEUVER

The Aleksandrov article thus ushered in a new, blatantly menacing stage in Soviet pressure on Czechoslovakia while informing the people in the USSR and allied East European countries that a crisis containing echoes of the 1956 Hungarian "counterrevolution" was at hand. Coupled with the release now of the letter to the Czechoslovak leadership invoking the Warsaw Pact, it establishes propaganda groundwork for the Soviets to move in any direction they may deem the situation to warrant.

THE "HEALTHY" FORCES

The Aleksandrov article not only specifically recalls the 1956 events but itself introduces elements that were present in Moscow's 1956 propaganda beginning with the 28 October 1956 article in PRAVDA. Thus the portrayal of "healthy" forces opposed to "counterrevolutionary" elements recalls the invocation of "healthy," "loyal," and "honest" forces in Soviet comment on the Hungarian events. The article singles out the Czechoslovak People's Militia as exemplifying the "healthy" forces; and Moscow's

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extensive publicity for Soviet popular solidarity meetings and messages of support for the militia's letter in the 21 June PRAVDA could be drawn upon in a future effort to represent this group as appealing for fraternal Soviet help to save socialism in Czechoslovakia.

The vague character of Moscow's references to "healthy" forces and of its criticism of "certain leading figures" in the Czechoslovak party has lent considerable flexibility to the Soviet propaganda pressure on the Prague leadership. Thus far Moscow media have refrained from criticizing the top leaders--party chief Dubcek, Premier Cernik, and President Smrkovsky--by name. The only high party officials who have been singled out for censure have been party Secretary Cisar (upbraided in the 14 June Konstantinov article in PRAVDA) and party Presidium member and National Front President Kriegel (taken to task by LITERARY GAZETTE for his "virtual endorsement" of the "2,000 Words"). Soviet propaganda has thus sought to bring pressure on the Czechoslovak leaders to abandon their permissive approach in favor of a crackdown on increasingly assertive liberal forces in their country.

Although Dubcek publicly deplored the "2,000 Words" statement, his efforts to make his more moderate views prevail have elicited no praise from Soviet media and no expressions of confidence that his centrist line can resolve the divergent pressures. The Aleksandrov article, by failing to acknowledge Dubcek's attack on the document, tacitly challenges the Czechoslovak leader to demonstrate his alignment with the "healthy" forces. The article gives recognition to the presence of such forces in the party by taking note of the Presidium's denunciation of the "2,000 Words," but by leaving their identity open it brings pressure against wavering elements to come down on the harder line being urged by Moscow. Should they fail to do so and should Moscow opt for action to depose them as it did Nagy, the propaganda groundwork would be prepared for sweeping them into the counterrevolutionary ranks.

RATIONALE FOR ACTION

The rationale advanced in 1956 for Moscow's right to interfere in another communist country's internal affairs is similarly invoked in the Aleksandrov article in 1968: "counterrevolutionary elements," supported by Western "imperialists," are trying to "undermine the socialist foundations" of a fraternal socialist country and restore capitalism. The parallel is strengthened

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and becomes more ominous in the joint letter's invocation of a threat to the socialist alliance represented by the Warsaw Pact.

The Czechoslovak leaders have displayed an acute awareness from the outset of the importance of reiterating Czechoslovakia's unswerving allegiance to the Pact. A Prague domestic radio commentator on 12 May was candid in pointing to general agreement among observers worldwide that "the USSR would have to have some provocation for intervention," such as "the withdrawal of Czechoslovakia from the Warsaw Pact."*

This optimistic appraisal of the situation on the part of the Czechs appeared as recently as 15 July in bold--and in the circumstances remarkably provocative--public proposals by Lt. Gen. Prchlik at a Prague press conference on 15 July for "qualitative changes" in the Pact setup, duly accompanied by an avowal that Czechoslovakia was "meeting all its commitments" within the Pact and by a remark ruling out "foreign interference." Prchlik, in statements publicized by CTK, suggested that the Pact Political Consultative Committee meet "regularly" instead of being "occasionally convoked." In a transparent allusion to the Warsaw meeting of the five bloc allies, he argued for guarantees against "factionalist activities" in the Pact framework which could "lead in the last analysis to violating the state sovereignty" of Pact members. He also complained about the "secondary" status of non-Soviet officers in the Pact command and called for a genuinely "international" composition of the joint command--a position repeated by Defense Minister Dzur in an article in RUDE PRAVO on 16 July. Soviet media have not so far reacted to Prchlik's or Dzur's statements.

Moscow has used the proxy of its East German ally to recognize a basic distinction between the context of the Hungarian rebellion and that of the Czechoslovak reformist movement. In summarizing NEUES DEUTSCHLAND's 13 July editorial article decrying "counterrevolutionary"

* For background on discussions of the Pact in official and unofficial Czechoslovak media during the spring and a review of the Soviet propaganda response, see FBIS Special Report CD.287 dated 12 July, "Soviet Propaganda on the Warsaw Pact: New Stress on the Importance of Socialist Unity."

trends in Czechoslovakia, PRAVDA on the 15th included the GDR paper's observation that "the enemy is not concentrating his efforts on a frontal attack, as in 1956, but on prolonged and sophisticated subversion primarily conducted by methods of psychological warfare." Moscow's pervasive, sustained propaganda line since the spring on the importance of shoring up socialist unity against Western efforts at "subversion" is reflected in the 15 July "official report" on the bloc leaders' Warsaw meeting: the TASS text contains a reference to "aggressive imperialist forces" striving "through subversive actions to undermine the socialist system in separate countries and to weaken ideological bonds and cooperation uniting socialist states."

Moscow has now established the propaganda groundwork for justifying responses in virtually any direction--from the relatively subtle and indirect to the overt and military. It has laid this groundwork within the setting of the Soviet bloc, disseminating the relevant propaganda to Czechoslovak and Soviet audiences and among other East European countries in the alliance. Roughly two-thirds of the comment on Czechoslovak events broadcast by Radio Moscow in the one-week period ending 14 July appeared in its Czech and Slovak services; these services have carried the Aleksandrov article and the followup articles in SOVIET RUSSIA and IZVESTIYA. The remaining third of Moscow's radio comment on the Czechoslovak situation during this period was broadcast almost entirely in the domestic service and for other East European audiences. Treatment of Czechoslovakia accounted for less than two percent of Radio Moscow's total commentary output during this week, on all subjects to all audiences taken together; thus the broadcast distribution of the comment on Czechoslovakia has reflected at once a sensitivity to the propaganda liability that would be incurred by wide publicity for Soviet pressure tactics and the basic immediate objective of reinforcing and tailoring this pressure on the Czechoslovak leadership.